



Using Solution Focused Brief Therapy in Educational Settings

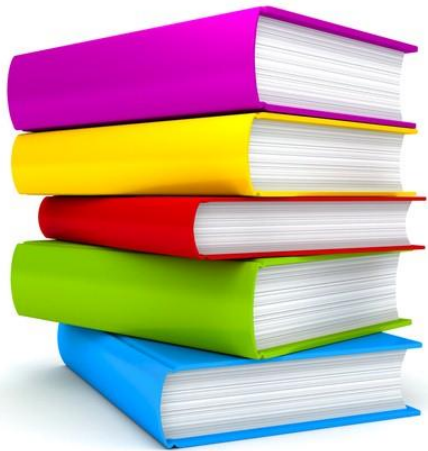
by Ruth Leveson & Belle Toy



Session Overview

- Rationale for using Solution Focused Brief Therapy
- Empirical evidence
- Applying SFBT
 - techniques
 - Terminating therapy
- Skills practice
 - Case-study analysis
 - Solution-Focused island





Today's presentation has been developed using two primary sources.

- Bannink, F.P. (2006) **1001 Solution Focused Questions**. Norton and Co; New York.
- De Shazer., Berg I.K., Lipchik E., Nunnally E., Molnar A., Gingerich W.C., and Weiner-Davis M. **Brief Therapy: Focused Solution Development**, *Family Process*, 25, pp 207-221.





Rationale for using Solution Focused Brief Therapy

So... why use Solution Focused Brief Therapy?

- SFBT has pragmatic value – it offers prescriptive methods to interact with young people over a limited period of time.
- It can produce better outcomes as therapy focusses on goals and empowerment of the young person.
- SFBT can result in behavioural change, which is measurable and can be validated against other data.



Think of a Problem...



- How long have you had the problem?
- How do you feel about the problem?
- How does it affect you and your life style?
- What do you believe is the cause/origin of the problem?
- How much does it bother you?
- What else is troubling you?



Using the Same Problem...



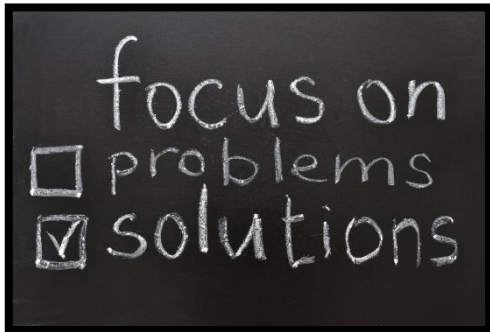
- What will it look like when the problem is solved?
- How will life be different when the problem is solved?
- How will it make a difference to others you are close to when the problem is solved?
- Are there times when the problem doesn't happen or isn't as bad?
- What is the first step toward a solution?



Essence of SFBT

In using SFBT, practitioners are to:

- work with the young person rather than the problem;
- look for resources rather than deficits;
- explore possible and preferred futures;
- explore what is already contributing to those possible futures; and
- treat the young person as the experts in all aspects of their lives.



When using SFBT, we assume...

- Every **client** is unique.
- All **clients** have the ability to find their own solutions.
- You cannot change **clients**; they can only change themselves.
- You are not the expert on the **client** and their social network; the **client** is.
- A **client's** solution is more likely to fit their particular situation and more likely to be implemented and maintained.
- No **problem** happens all the time; there are always exceptions that can be found and built on.
- A focus on the possible and changeable is more helpful than a focus on a **problem** that is overwhelming and intractable.
- The client is not the **problem**. The **problem** is the **problem**.
- **Problems** that appear complex, may not necessarily require a complex solution
- **Change** is happening all the time.
- Small **changes** can make a big difference.
- Rapid **change** or resolution can happen when people hit on ideas that work.
- There may well have been some pre-session **change** .

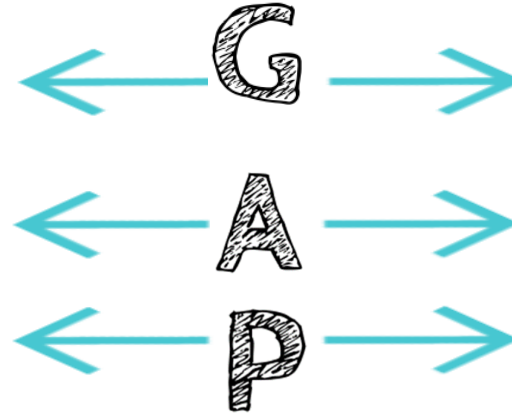


Stress: a Child's Story



Preferred View

Competent
Calm / Patient
Supportive
Good listener
Sense of humour
Persistent
Respectful
Peaceful
Healthy



Emotions

Angry
Frustrated
Confused
Hopeless
Depressed
Frightened

Behaviours

Defensive
Shouting
Aggressive
Withdrawing
Avoidant
Hostile

View of Self & View of other's View of Self

"Aggro"
Rude
Out of control
Incompetent
Uncommunicative
Unreliable
Irritable
Bad temper
"Loser"
Shouting at family/friends





Empirical Evidence

SFBT: an Evidence Based Approach



- There have been seventy-seven (77) empirical studies on the effectiveness of SFBT.
- There is combined effectiveness data from over 2800 cases.
- Research was completed in “real world” settings so the results are more generalisable.
- SFBT has been proven to be as equally effective for all social classes.



What's the efficacy of using SFBT with children and adolescents?

The effectiveness of SFBT with children and families: A systematic and critical evaluation of the literature from 1990 – 2010

Bond, C., Woods, K., Humphrey, N., Symes, W. & Green, L. (2013),. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry , Vol 54.

Effectiveness of Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) in a school setting

Gingerich, W. J., & Eisengart, S. (2000), Journal of Family Processes, Vol 39, Iss 4.

Use of Solution Focused Brief Therapy in referrals for bullying

Young, S., & Holdorf, G. (2003), Educational Psychology and Practice, Vol 19, Iss 4.

Solution Focused Brief Therapy: Impacts on academic and emotional difficulties

Julia Daki and Robert S. Savage (2010), Journal Of Educational Research Vol. 103 , Iss. 5.





Application of SFBT - Techniques



Conversation Outline



- Problem free talk
- Hopes for the session
- Miracle question
- Exceptions (part of the miracle)
- Scaling questions

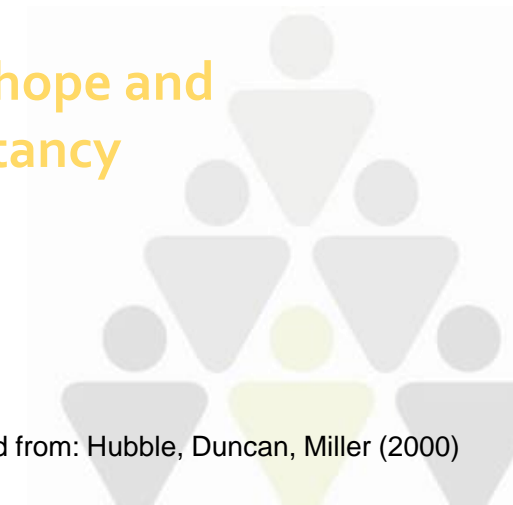
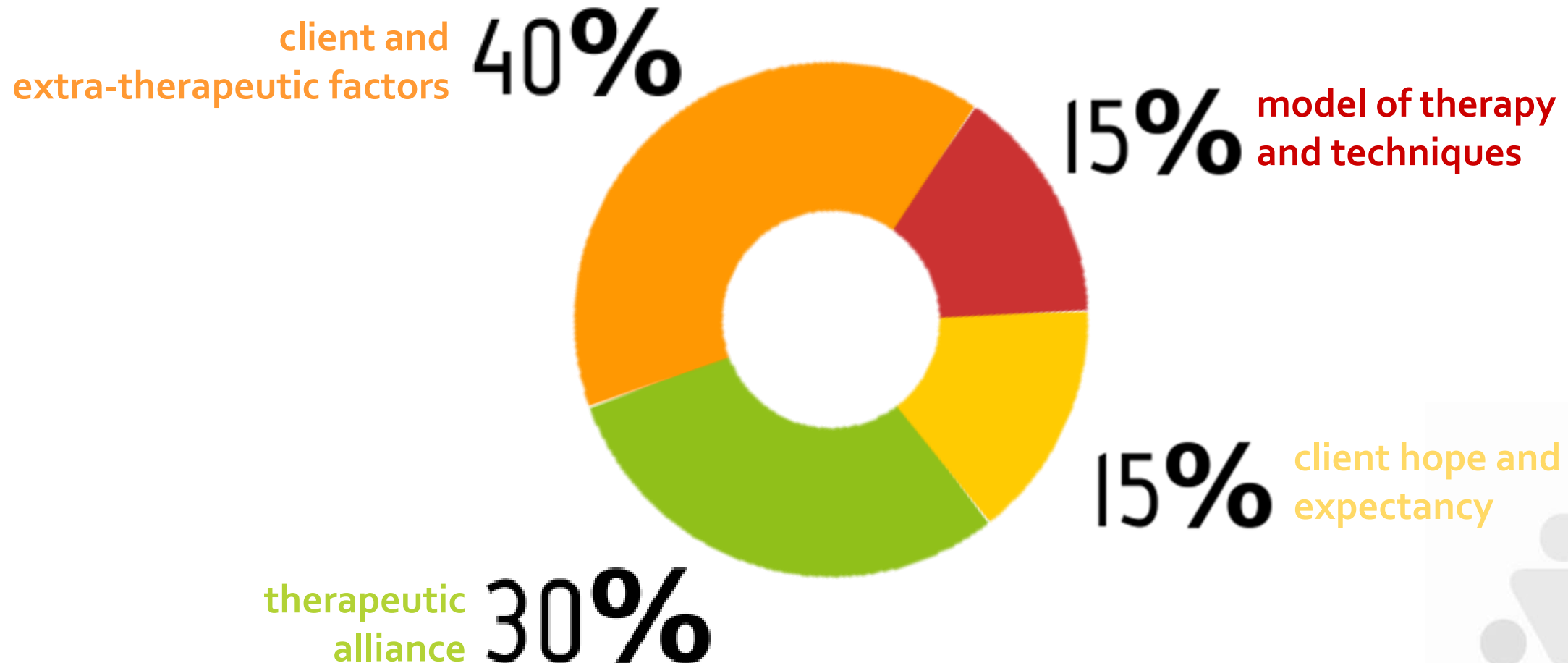




Application of SFBT - Connect with your Client



Connect with your Client



Connect with your Client



- Use the young person's key words
- Suppose...
- Different, difference
 - "What difference would it make?"
 - "What would you do instead?"
- Good Reasons
 - "You must have good reason to..."
- How helpful is that?
 - "How would that be helpful?"



Connect with your Client

Problem Free Talk

This involves talking with the young person about anything in their life apart from the problem, and can be introduced by saying:

"I've got a little bit of information about what brings you here, but I know almost nothing about you. I'd find it useful to hear a little bit about you before going back to what brings you here today. Would that be all right?"

This indicates that knowing about the problem tells the worker 'almost nothing' about the young person, thus separating client and problem.

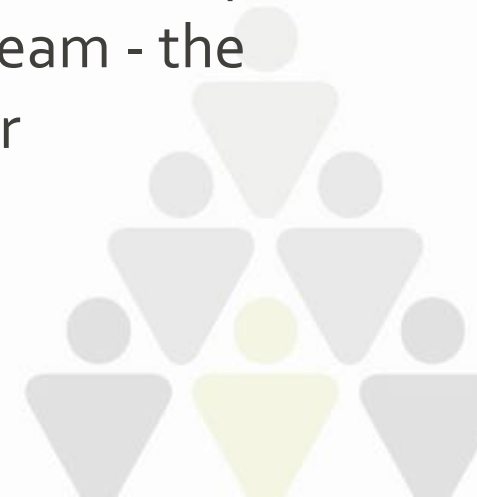


Connect with your Client



Listening with a 'Constructive Ear'

- If part of the young person's way of co-operating is to give a detailed account of the problems that beset them, the task is to listen with a 'constructive ear'.
- Listen for clues about strengths, resources and motivation.
- Younger children may take some time to identify their hopes for support and to find out about their solution team - the people in their live who can offer them support or encouragement.



Connect with your Client

Things to Consider:

- Don't rush your client into problem-free talk - if a young person needs to unburden themselves, they may need some time talking about problems to get this off their chest
- Ask yourself:
 - "what does the child or young person like?";
 - "are they particularly active, creative or imaginative?"; and
 - "do they enjoy role playing or drawing or listening to and telling stories?".
- If the child is struggling to identify their strengths , it may be useful to ask "What would a friend say about you? "



Therapeutic tool: Strengths Shield



Support the young person to reflect on some of the actions they have implemented that they feel have been positive for them.

Work together to create a “Personal shield or crest” that will represent the positive attributes and strategies they have identified.

Encourage them to link this with attributes and qualities they see in themselves, by asking questions like:

- *“what did it take to do that?”; or*
- *“what was it that helped you do that?”.*

(Adapted from National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children., 'Solution focused practice: A toolkit for working with children and young people', 2014)



Application of SFBT - Miracle Question

Therapeutic tool: Look into my Crystal Ball



The crystal ball metaphor can be used to help the young person to identify and define their best hopes.

Crystal balls are neutral, so encourage the child to think about what they want in the future.

Questions to consider:

- “what your best hopes for our work together?”
- “is there anything that you would like to change in your life?”
- “... and if you changed that, what would be different about you?”

(Adapted from National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children., 'Solution focused practice: A toolkit for working with children and young people', 2014)



Therapeutic tool: Create your Solution Team with... buttons!

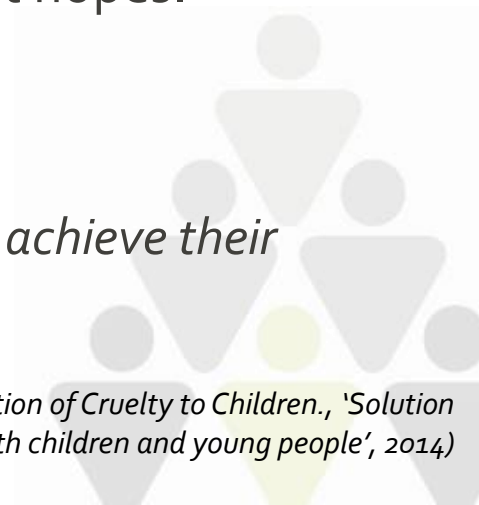


Following discussion of the child's best hopes and preferred future, it may be a helpful exercise to ask who they would choose to put in a **solution team**.

You can do this by using... buttons! Discuss how the child can draw on these sources of support to help them move in the right direction.

- provide a mixed selection of buttons of different shapes and sizes.
- ask the child to select buttons to represent different family members, carers or friends who can help them move towards their best hopes.
- ask the child:
 - *"How does the button represent a quality of that person?"*
 - *"Which people (represented by buttons) will help the child to achieve their best hopes? How do they help?"*

(Adapted from National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children., 'Solution focused practice: A toolkit for working with children and young people', 2014)



It's a Miracle

- The purpose of children describing their preferred future is to release the imagination of what is possible and what can be. You could initiate the conversation in this way:

"Suppose, when you wake up tomorrow you find that (insert whatever their best hopes are here) has happened, but you do not know that this miracle has happened because you are asleep. When you wake you tomorrow morning– what's the first thing you would notice about yourself?"

- It works well to start with the first thing that the child would notice as you can then encourage them to describe their whole day from start to finish, with lots of detail, what they would be doing, how they would feel, what they would do , what other people would notice etc.



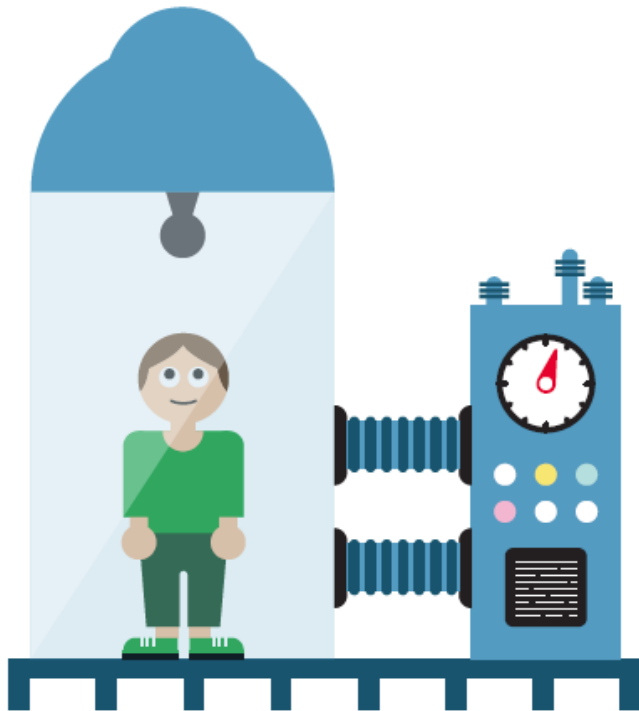
It's a Miracle

Things to Consider

- Make sure that the way you discuss the Miracle Question with the young person is appropriate to their age, interests and cultural background
- Encourage the young person to add as much detail as possible to their description of their preferred future. Be mindful of not moving on too quickly from this stage of the process
- Note that scenarios involving miracles or magic may not be appropriate for all young people.
- Some young people might enjoy play acting their “miracle day” waking up in their bed, discovering that the miracle has occurred and then acting on how they might behave on that day.

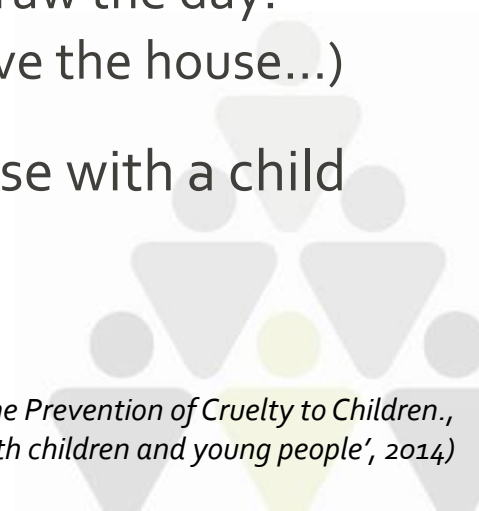


Therapeutic tool: Drawing a Time Machine



- Ask the young person to draw a picture of a time machine and of themselves getting out of the time machine
- The time machine has taken you to a point in the future when things are how you would like them to be
 - What is it like when you leave the time machine?
 - What would your day be like? (Describe/ draw the day: getting up, breakfast, getting ready to leave the house...)
- Alternatively, you could role play this exercise with a child who enjoys acting out scenarios.

*(Adapted from National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.,
'Solution focused practice: A toolkit for working with children and young people', 2014)*



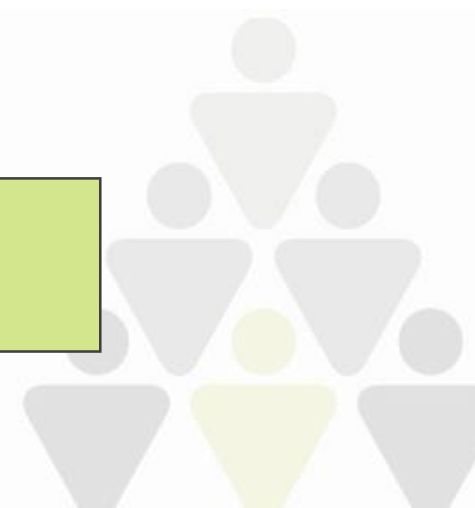


Application of SFBT - Exceptions

Finding an exception to the Rule

- A great deal of solution focused work will be about working with the young person to identify behaviours or activities that are already helping them move towards their preferred future.
- Exceptions are used in situations where the young person is focused on talking about their problems and is struggling to describe their preferred future.
- The process can help the young person to recognise that the problem is not a problem all of the time, to think of ways that they can build on their existing strengths and coping skills.
- An exception might be:

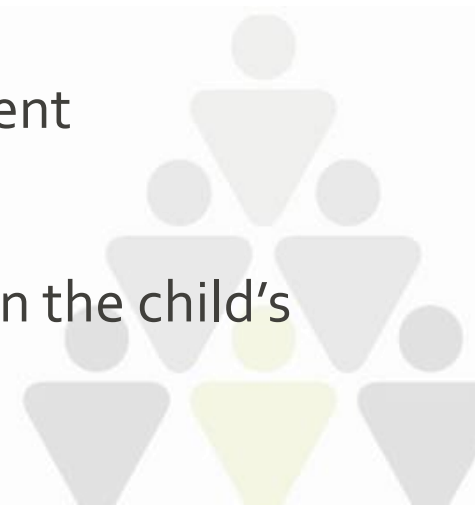
"This week I was able to stay downstairs and watch TV with my mum and we didn't have an argument that day"



Finding an exception to the Rule

Things to Consider:

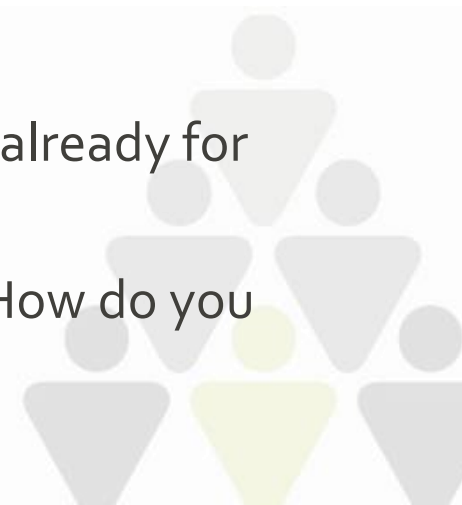
- When the young person is talking, listen out for moments when they give aspects of their preferred future that have already happened;
- Make sure to reflect these examples back to the child or young person
- Ask the young person to try and notice, between sessions, their own examples of moments when they did something that was helpful to them.
- You may want to focus on what the child did, when setbacks occur, to prevent themselves from *falling* even further down
- It may be necessary to discuss the difference between things that are within the child's control and things that are not.



Finding an exception to the Rule

Example questions:

- “Have there been any times when for some reason this problem has not been so bad/not occurred?”
- “Can you remember any times at all when you thought the problem would have occurred but it didn’t?”
- “Have there been times when you feel like you stood up to this problem even a little?”
- “I’m curious, you said that except for Christmas, the problem has been with you all year.... what was different about Christmas?”
- “I’m wondering if there are times now where even a fraction of that happens already for some reason?”
- “What did you do to get that to happen/ How did you know how to do that? How do you make sense of that?”

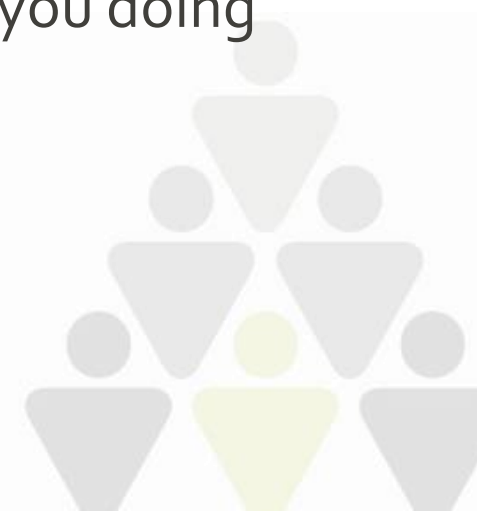
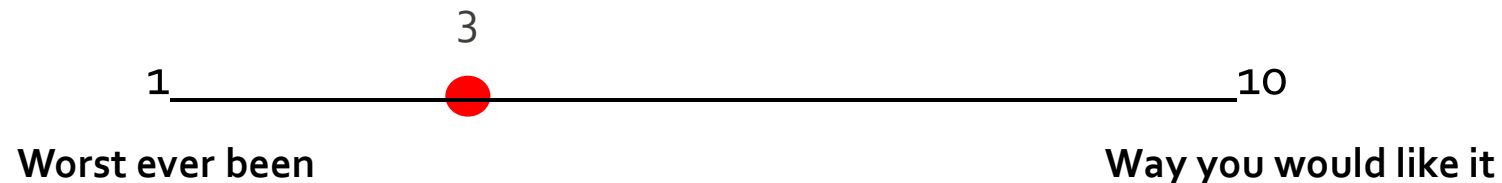




Application of SFBT - Scaling Questions

Scaling Questions: from OK to Good to Great

- Scaling questions are used to breakdown the preferred future into small actions or steps, thus asking the young person to explain what one step on the scale looks like.
- It is important not to move up the scale too quickly and to draw out detail about what the child is doing to be at the point they have reached on the scale.
- For example:
 - A young person currently at 3 on scale, may be asked “what are you doing to get number 3, rather than 2 or 1?”



Scaling Questions: from OK to Good to Great

Scaling Questions:

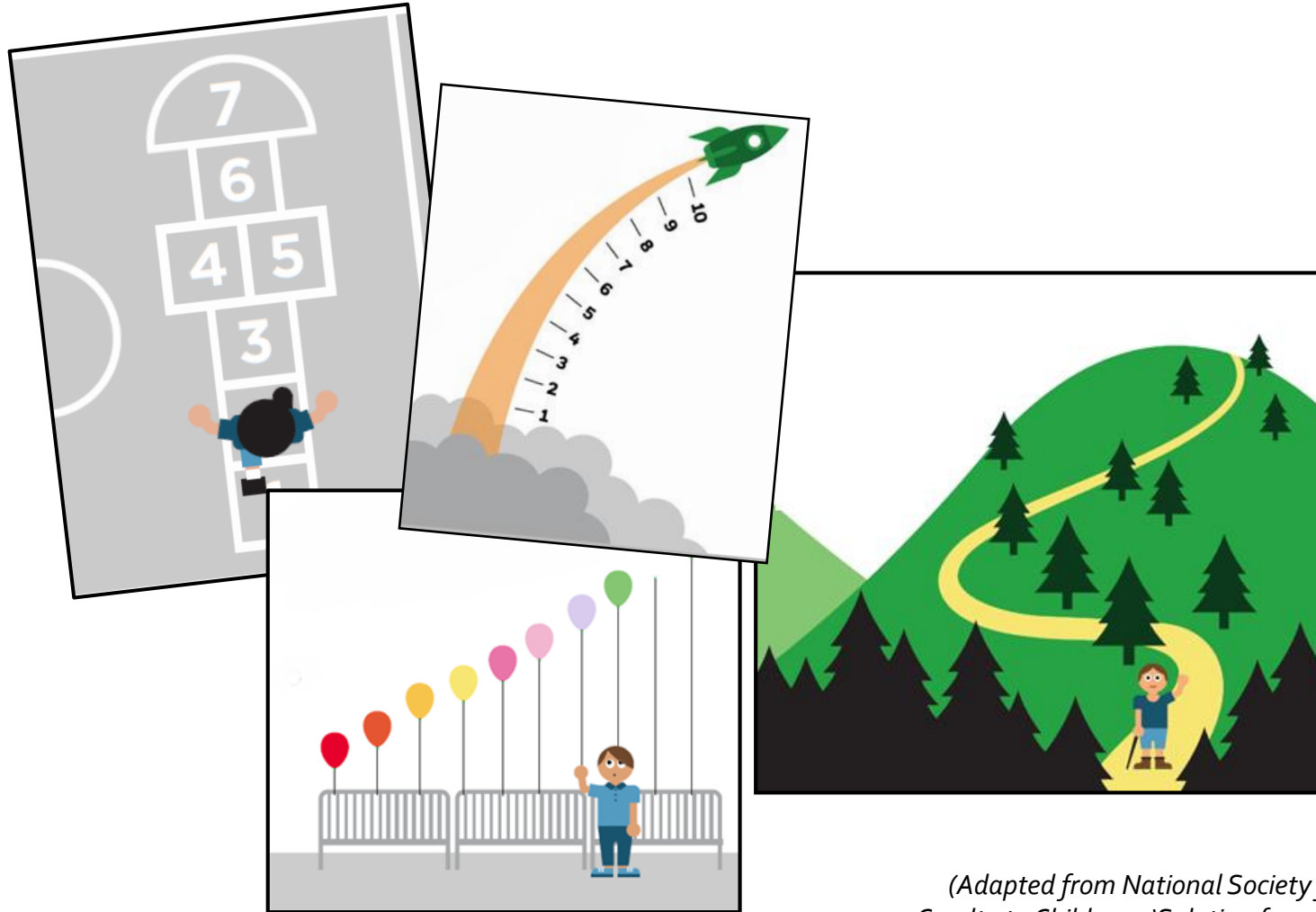
- have the assumption of change;
- offer goal direction;
- imply the young person has a degree of control;
- enable objectifiable and quantifiable goals; and
- offer a continuum rather than black and white terms.

Examples may include:

- situation now + next step;
- willingness + next step;
- confidence + next step;
- decision making + next step; and
- coping + next step.



Scaling Questions: from OK to Good to Great



(Adapted from National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children., 'Solution focused practice: A toolkit for working with children and young people', 2014)



Application of SFBT - Compliments

"Who's the most awesome person today?... You!"



- Compliments are powerful interventions that reinforce a young person's feeling of competency and self-esteem.
- Similarly, undesired behaviour is paid minimal attention and therefore extinguished in this framework.
- Three types of compliments are used in SFBT;
 - direct,
 - Indirect, and
 - frame changing compliments.



"Who's the most awesome person today?... You!"



In pairs:

- describe a compliment that you received at school that has stuck in your mind.
- Once described, your partner is required to respond "*and what difference did that make to you?*" as often as possible; until the impact has been unearthed.
- Swap roles so both parties can participate.





Application of SFBT - Terminating Therapy

Terminating Therapy

- SFBT practice should be lead by the young person and will result in them deciding when things are *good enough* and when the work is complete.
- Part of the process will include the young person reviewing (at each meeting) where they feel they are in relation to their preferred future and to their need for future sessions;
- This may include gaining confidence to implement and maintain skills and strategies they have used in moving towards their preferred future .





Application of SFBT - Coping Questions

Coping Questions: Unearthing the Child's Resources

Coping questions are designed to elicit information about a child's resources that may have gone unnoticed by them.

If improvement has been made

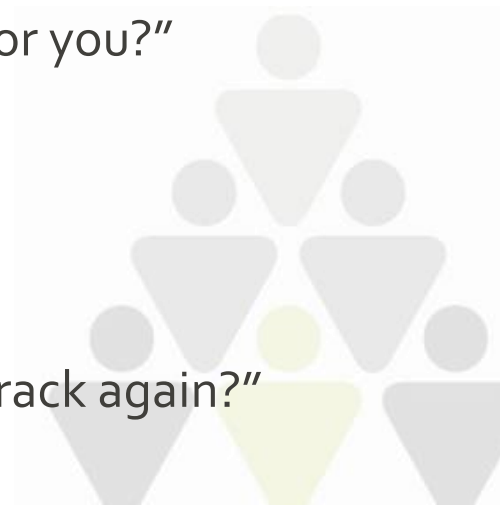
- "What's been better since we last met?"
- "What did you do... how did you do it?"
- "What did others see you doing?"
- "What have you learnt about yourself?"
- "What would be the signs that you were doing more of the things that are good for you?"

If things are the same

- "How have you stopped things getting worse?"

If things are worse

- "Have you been coping with situation and how do you think you can get back on track again?"



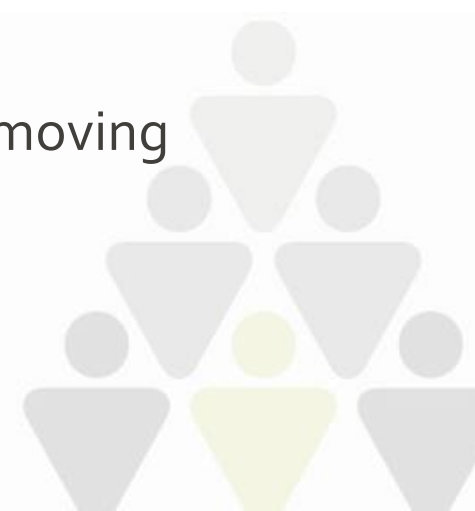


Application of SFBT - Consolidation & Working toward Endings

Working toward Endings

At the last session - (Consolidation):

- Help the young person to recap what they have learned;
- Celebrate their achievements and create a record that they can keep;
- Discuss what's next and how they will keep building on their progress;
- Discuss the child or young person's solution team – “who will help them keep up their progress?”
“is there anybody the young person would like to share their work with?”;
- Remind the child of the resources they have identified to help them keep moving toward their preferred future; and
- Be aware that each session may turn out to be the child's last



Therapeutic Tool: Using Affirmation Cards

- Include phrases such as **“I am a good friend”, “I am a confident person” or “I can stay calm”**.
- Affirmations should come from the young person; therefore, within this process the practitioner can explore:
 - Linking the young person’s achievements to their identity - e.g. “what kind of person can do this/ what does this say about you?”
 - The practitioner can then work with the young person to agree affirmative statements about himself/herself.
- In agreement with the young person, these ‘self talk’ statements can be written or printed and laminated as a reminder.



(Adapted from National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children., 'Solution focused practice: A toolkit for working with children and young people', 2014)

A stack of several books is shown, with the spines and edges of the pages visible. A solid green horizontal banner is positioned across the middle of the image, partially obscuring the books. The text "Skills Practice - Case Study Analysis" is written in black on this banner.

Skills Practice - Case Study Analysis

Case Study

Aaron is a 12 year old student and new to your school. His Mother spoke with the school's Principal and both agreed it would be beneficial for Aaron to meet with you; before starting classes.

Aaron disclosed that he does not want to attend a new school as he knows that in some classes the teacher will instruct him to introduce himself. Just thinking about sitting there, waiting to introduce himself to a roomful of strangers who will be staring at him makes him feel nauseous.

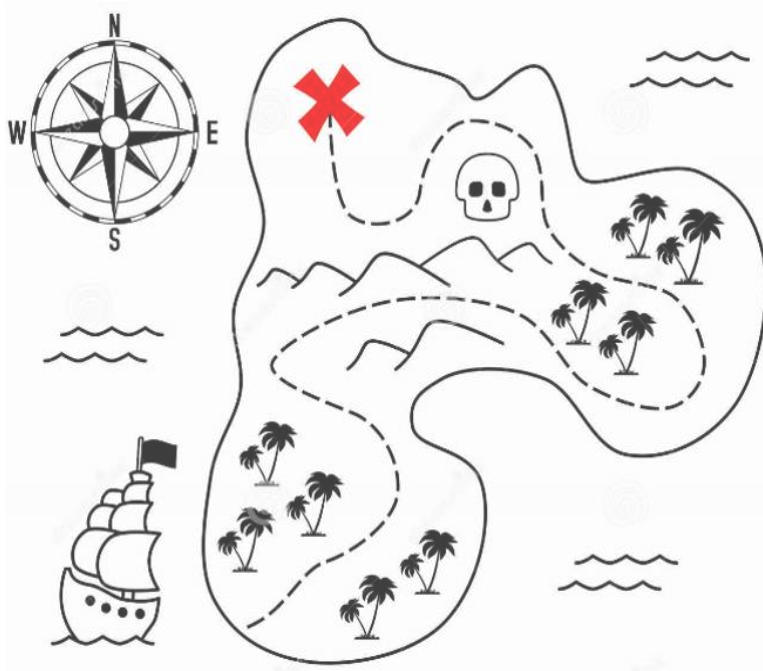
He knows he won't be able to think clearly because his anxiety will be so high, and he is sure he will leave out important details. He is concerned his voice might even quiver and that he will sound scared and tentative.





Skills Practice - Solution Focused Island

Activity: Solution Focused Island



**Helping a child move from a
Problem Island to a
Solution Focused Island**



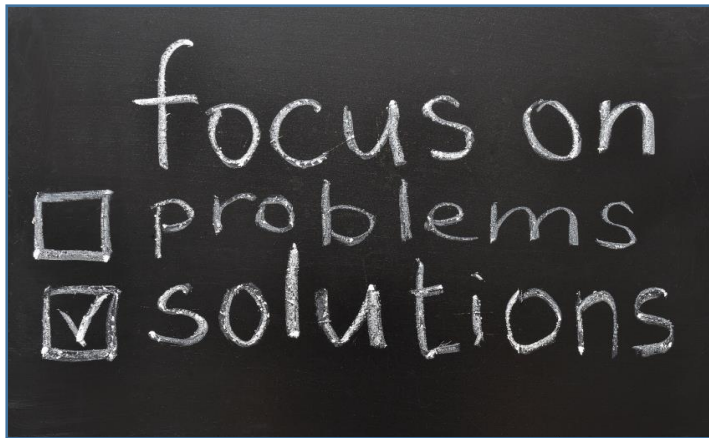
Activity: who Inspires you?

In pairs, think of someone in your life who has attributes you particularly admire or would like to emulate.

- Describe to your partner what these attributes are, including a memory or incident that epitomises these e.g. a colleague, supervisor, partner or parent.
- Is there a time in your own life where you feel you reflect these qualities or attributes, even in part? When are you more likely to do this? How do you make sense of this? What helps you to do this? What do you like about this? What difference does it make to you (or those around you)?
- On a scale of 1 - 10, how closely do you feel you reflect these qualities in your life?
- What would need to happen to rate yourself even one point higher?



Final Thoughts



if it isn't broken, don't fix it!

once you know what works, do more of it.

if it doesn't work, don't do it again, do something different.





Thank you for your participation. Enjoy the rest of your day.